

From dock door to point of fit

What warehouse consulting looks like when you spend time on site





Introduction

Warehouse consulting is often discussed in abstract terms: inbound, outbound, putaway, pick. In practice, warehouses operate through **doors, bins, forklifts, work centres, constraints and exceptions**. The difference between a theoretical design and an operationally successful solution lies in how well those physical realities are understood and accounted for.

This whitepaper explores what *hands-on warehouse consulting* really looks like when designing SAP Extended Warehouse Management (EWM). It traces the lifecycle of goods **from dock door to point of fit** and highlights why effective blueprinting requires more than process diagrams and standard templates.

The perspective shared here is rooted in first-hand delivery experience across complex, high-volume, and time-critical warehouse environments.

The problem with “above-the-warehouse” design

Large transformation programmes often approach warehouse design as a purely logical exercise. Processes are defined in workshops, flows are drawn and “standard SAP” is assumed to bridge the gap between design and execution. Common symptoms of this approach include:

Generic storage type structures replicated across very different physical sites

Over-simplified inbound and outbound flows

Minimal consideration for exception handling

Reliance on operational teams to adapt the system once live

The result is predictable: workarounds, manual interventions and growing tension between operational reality and system design.

“Warehouses do not fail because SAP EWM cannot support them. They fail because the design does not start on the warehouse floor”.

Adam Wilson,
Digital Supply Chain, Logistics Lead, TCT

What going on site changes

When consultants spend time on site, blueprinting changes fundamentally. Instead of asking “*what is your inbound process?*”, the questions become:

How many doors do you have, and how are they used?

What physically happens when a truck arrives early, late, or partially loaded?

Where does stock stop when it can’t continue on the happy path?

What information does an operator need right now, not eventually?

These questions force designs to engage with reality, not aspiration.

Dock doors are not a formality

In many blueprints, doors are a footnote. In operational warehouses, they are a constraint. Effective designs:

Explicitly model doors as system objects

Define inbound, outbound and shared usage

Align doors with staging areas and material flow

Account for congestion, prioritisation and yard movements

“When doors are abstracted away, pressure builds elsewhere in the process. When they are designed properly, flow improves upstream and downstream”.



Andy Taberner,
Senior Solutions Architect, TCT.

Staging areas are decision points, not holding pens

Staging is often treated as a transient state. In practice, it is where decisions are made:

Is quality inspection required?

Does the handling unit need deconsolidation?

Is further processing needed before putaway?

Blueprints that succeed define:

Dynamic staging determination

Clear routing logic from staging to work centres

Explicit system behaviour when items cannot proceed

This removes ambiguity for operators and prevents ad-hoc workarounds from creeping in at go-live.

Storage design must reflect physical reality

No two warehouses store stock in the same way, even when they run the same system. A hands-on approach distinguishes between:

Fixed bin pick faces versus reserve locations

Bulk floor storage versus racking

HU-managed versus bin-level availability

Commodity zoning driven by weight, sequence, or handling method

These decisions are not academic. They determine travel distance, congestion, availability calculation and replenishment logic. Designing storage properly means standing in the aisles, watching how stock moves and acknowledging what will never happen “because the system says so”.

Work centres are where complexity lives

Most warehouse complexity does not sit in putaway or picking. It sits in what happens in between:

Inspection

Repacking

Washing

Deconsolidation

Exception handling

Blueprints that reflect operational reality model work centres as first-class citizens:

With dedicated storage types

With explicit entry and exit rules

With linked system tasks rather than manual intervention

“If work centres are not designed properly, complexity simply leaks into the warehouse floor.”



Damon Conway,
Senior Solution Architect, TCT

From inbound to point of fit: the end-to-end view

Designing for the “endpoint” matters. Whether the destination is: A production supply area, a kitting location, a line-side buffer or a consolidation lane. Successful blueprints define how stock transitions across multiple warehouses, buildings, or zones and how urgency, sequencing and production priorities influence that movement. This end-to-end thinking avoids local optimisation at the expense of overall flow. Exception handling is not optional

Real warehouses spend a significant amount of time outside the happy path:

Blind receipts

Emergency line feeds

Pre-allocated stock

Backfill after promotions

Out-of-sequence arrivals

Designs that ignore these scenarios force operational teams to improvise.

Hands-on blueprinting:

Defines exception paths explicitly

Provides controlled system mechanisms (not workarounds)

Accepts that perfect data and perfect timing do not exist

This is where experience shows most clearly. Technology should enable operators, not burden them. The ultimate test of a warehouse blueprint is simple: Does it make life easier for the people doing the work? That means:

- Minimising decision-making at the RF device
- Presenting the right information at the right time
- Reducing keystrokes and navigation complexity
- Supporting recovery when things go wrong

Operator experience is not a “change” topic. It is a design responsibility.

Why this approach differs from large consultancies

Large consultancies are structured to scale delivery. That often means:

- Reusable templates
- Abstracted models
- Limited on-site exposure

Specialist teams operate differently, smaller, experienced consultants:

- Direct accountability for design decisions
- Willingness to get into uncomfortable detail
- Designs built around what actually happens

This is not about being anti-standard or anti-SAP. It is about recognising that standard solutions need informed application.

Conclusion: Real warehouses demand real design

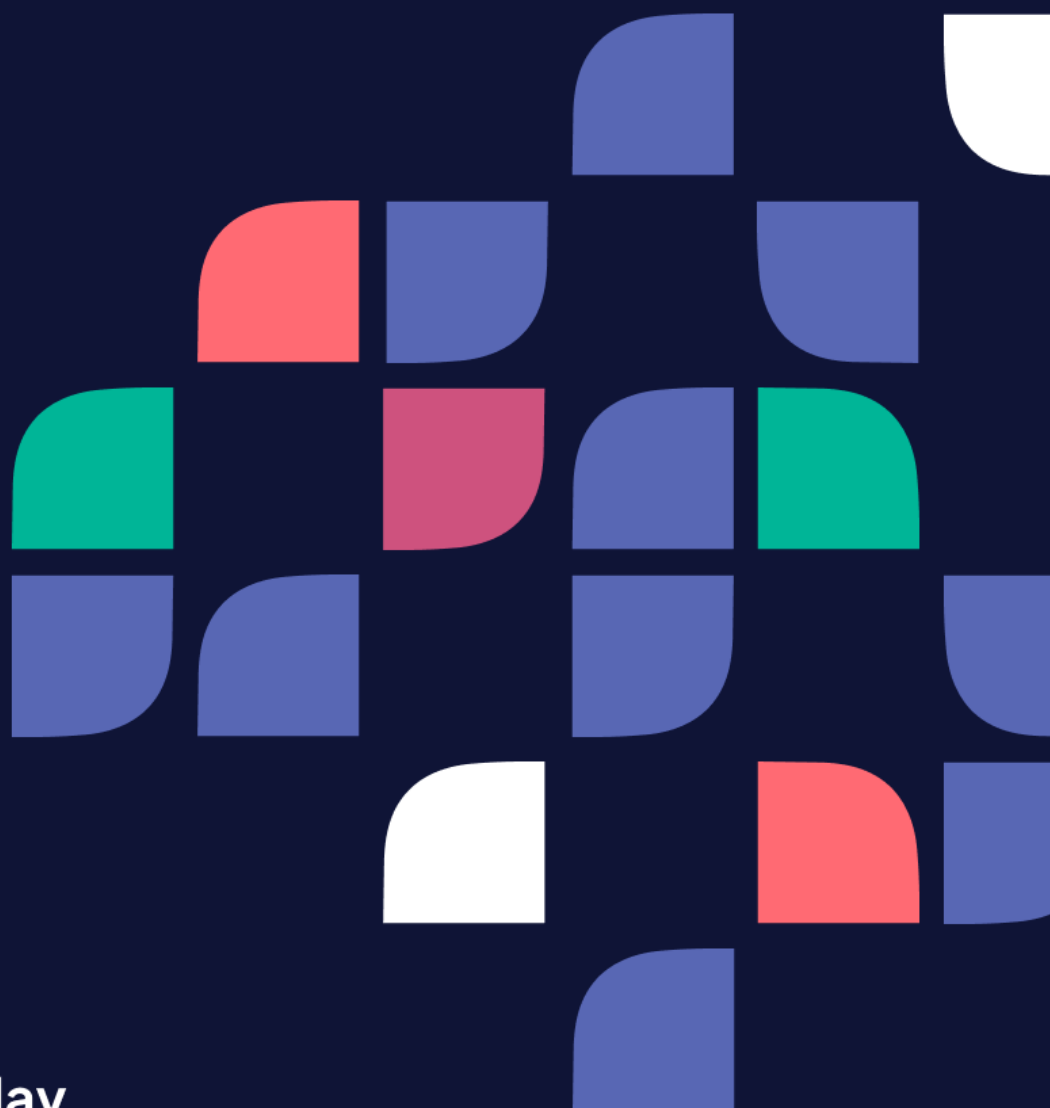
Warehouse systems succeed when their design respects physical reality, operator behaviour and operational pressure. Blueprints that start on the warehouse floor:

- Reduce exceptions post-go-live
- Improve adoption and trust
- Shorten the path from system support to operational value

“From dock door to point of fit, detail matters and detail only emerges when consultants roll up their sleeves and go on site”



Phil Foulger,
Senior Solution Architect, TCT



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